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Food Makes The Difference!



Ideas For Leaders Working With Economy-Minded Families

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The one week's meals shown in PA-934, "Ideas for Economy-Minded Families," and PA-935, "Ideas for Families Using Donated Foods," are based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economy Food Plan. The following information about the Economy Plan may be useful to leaders in counseling with families about their food costs and food needs.

WHAT IS THE ECONOMY FOOD PLAN?

The Economy Food Plan is the least expensive of the USDA's five food plans. It was developed for leaders to help homemakers who have very limited food budgets provide their families with nutritionally adequate diets. It goes beyond the suggestions in the Daily Food Guide, which economy-minded homemakers are encouraged to use in planning meals. The plan specifies quantities of food in a complete diet, while the Guide suggests only minimum amounts to serve.

The plan (page 4) shows the amounts of eleven groups of foods that together can provide adequate diets for men and women, boys and girls of different ages, and for pregnant and nursing women. In the last column of the table, the estimated cost of the foods in the plan is given for each individual. By totaling figures for the individuals in the family, the amounts of food needed and the estimated cost for a family can be found.

Studies show that most families spending as little as the cost for the Economy Plan do not select foods that make a good diet for every family member. A homemaker needs considerable skill and interest in buying and preparing food, if she is to provide her family with a good diet for as little as the cost of the plan. Many homemakers with limited budgets do not have the skill or interest, or the equipment needed to do this. However, with the information and encouragement furnished by the leader or aide, many of these families will have a better chance of obtaining a good diet.

An important part of the leader's job is to help the homemaker use her food money to select foods that best meet the needs of her family. Leaders also can help eligible families obtain food assistance through programs available in the locality, such as Food Stamp Program, Commodity Distribution Program, Child Feeding Program, and Supplemental Food Program for infants and young children and pregnant and nursing women.

COST OF FOOD IN THE ECONOMY FOOD PLAN

The cost of the Economy Plan can help the leader to decide whether the food money available to a family is sufficient to provide a good diet. Costs for any family can be estimated using the figures for individuals in the last column of the table on page 4.

- List the costs of the plan for the people eating at home during the week:
 - (1) **For those who eat all meals at home**, or carried from home in packed lunches, use the amount shown in the table.
 - (2) **For those who eat some meals out**, deduct 5 percent from the amount in the table for each meal not eaten at home. For example, if the husband eats lunch out five times a week, subtract 25 percent or one-fourth of the cost shown for his age group.
 - (3) **For guests** or others who eat with the family occasionally, list 5 percent of the amount in the table for the proper age group for each meal. Suppose Grandmother eats her midday and evening meals on Sunday with the family. Add 10 percent or one-tenth of the amount for the woman her age.
- Next, total the amounts listed, and adjust the total if there are more or fewer than 4 persons usually eating at the family table. Costs in the table on page 4 are for individuals in families of 4 persons. Adjustment is necessary because large families tend to buy and use foods more economically than small families. If the family has—

1 person	.....	add 20 percent
2 persons	.....	add 10 percent
3 persons	.....	add 5 percent
4 persons	.....	use as is
5 persons	.....	subtract 5 percent
6 or more persons	.....	subtract 10 percent

- Now, compare the cost of the plan with what the family actually spends for food eaten at home during the week. Do not count the money spent for nonfood items—soap, cigarettes, paper goods, pet foods, and such. Cost estimates for the plan do not include these nonfood items.

Costs for the Economy Plan should be used only as a rough guide to amounts of money needed. The costs assume that all food used during the week is **bought**, and that prices are similar to those paid by low-income families across the country. Allowances will need to be made if the family uses some foods that are produced at home, donated, or received as gift or pay; or if local stores have unusually low or high prices.

Costs of foods in the Economy Plan are estimated quarterly and are available upon request from the Consumer and Food Economics Research Division, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Federal Center Building, Hyattsville, Maryland 20782.

AMOUNTS OF FOOD IN THE ECONOMY FOOD PLAN

The amount of food in the Economy Plan for a family can be found by totaling, for each food group, the amounts for the individuals in the family. These amounts together are sufficient to provide all meals and snacks for the family for a week.

The Economy Plan includes generous amounts of dry beans, breads, cereals, and potatoes—foods that generally provide important nutrients at relatively low cost. However, it includes smaller amounts of meat, eggs, fruit and vegetables (except potatoes) than are used by many low-income families. In planning meals with this plan, it is best to use the meats, eggs, vegetables and fruit in small servings and in combination with other foods to give maximum flavor and variety.

The plan shows amounts of eleven groups of foods. Foods within any one group have similar nutrient qualities. The first nine groups are parts of the four Daily Food Guide groups. The last two, fats and oils and sugars and sweets, are included in the Guide as part of the "Other food." Coffee, tea, and cocoa; seasonings; baking powder and soda; and the like are not included in the food plan. An allowance for these items is made in figuring costs of the plan.

Commonly used foods in each of the groups are shown below:

Milk, cheese, ice cream: Milk—whole, skim, buttermilk, dry, evaporated, condensed; cheese; cream; ice cream.

Meat, poultry, fish: Beef, veal, lamb, pork (includes bacon and salt pork); variety meats such as liver, heart, and tongue; luncheon meats; poultry; game; fish and shellfish; mixtures mostly meat.

Eggs.

Dry beans and peas, nuts: Dry beans of all kinds; dry peas; lentils; soybeans and soya products; peanuts, peanut butter, and tree nuts; soups, mostly legumes.

Flour, cereals, baked goods: Flour and meal, cereals, rice, hominy, noodles, macaroni, spaghetti, bread, cake, other baked goods, mixtures mostly grain.

Citrus fruits, tomatoes: Grapefruit, lemons, limes, oranges, tangerines, tomatoes.

Dark-green and deep-yellow vegetables: Broccoli, chard, collards, kale, spinach, other dark greens; carrots, pumpkin, sweetpotatoes, yellow winter squash.

Potatoes: White potatoes.

Other vegetables and fruits: All vegetables and fruits not included in other groups, such as asparagus, beets, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, corn, cucumbers, green lima beans, snapbeans, lettuce, okra, onions, parsnips, peas, peppers, rutabagas, sauerkraut, summer squash, turnips. Apples, avocados, bananas, berries of all kinds, cherries, dates, figs, grapes, melons, peaches, pears, pineapple, plums, prunes, raisins, rhubarb.

Fats and oils: Butter, margarine, mayonnaise, salad dressing, salad and cooking oils, shortening.

Sugars, sweets: Sugar, granulated, powdered, brown, maple; molasses; sirup; honey; jams; jellies; preserves; powdered and prepared desserts.

ECONOMY FOOD PLAN—Amounts of food¹ and cost for a week

Daily Food Guide Groups	MILK	MEAT		BREAD-CEREAL	VEGETABLE-FRUIT					OTHER FOODS		Est. cost, U.S. av. June 1969 ⁶
		Meat, poultry, fish ³	Eggs	Dry beans, peas, nuts ⁴	Flour, cereals, baked goods ⁵	Citrus fruit, tomatoes	Dark-green & deep-yellow veg.	Potatoes	Other veg. & fruits	Fats, oils	Sugars, sweets	
	Lb. Oz.	No.	Lb. Oz.	Lb. Oz.	Lb. Oz.	Lb. Oz.	Lb. Oz.	Lb. Oz.	Lb. Oz.	Lb. Oz.	Oz.	Dollars
Family Members	Qt.											
Children:												
7 months up to 1 year	4	1 0	4	0 0	1 0	1 0	0 4	0 12	1 0	0 2	0 2	2.70
1 to 2 years	4	1 4	4	0 1	1 12	1 0	0 4	1 0	2 0	0 4	0 4	3.50
3 to 5 years	3½	1 8	4	0 4	2 4	1 4	0 4	1 8	2 8	0 6	0 6	4.10
6 to 8 years	3½	1 12	5	0 6	3 0	1 8	0 8	2 8	3 0	0 10	0 10	5.00
Girls:												
9 to 11 years ..	5	1 12	5	0 10	2 12	1 12	0 12	2 8	3 4	0 8	0 10	5.70
12 to 14 years ..	6	2 0	6	0 10	3 0	1 12	1 0	3 0	3 8	0 10	0 10	6.30
15 to 19 years ..	6	2 0	6	0 8	2 12	1 12	1 4	2 8	3 4	0 8	0 10	6.40
Boys:												
9 to 11 years ..	5	2 0	5	0 8	3 4	1 8	0 12	2 12	3 4	0 10	0 10	5.90
12 to 14 years ..	6	2 0	5	0 10	4 4	1 12	0 12	3 8	3 8	0 14	0 12	6.80
15 to 19 years ..	6	2 8	5	0 10	5 0	1 12	0 12	4 12	3 8	1 0	0 14	7.90
Women:												
20 to 34 years ..	3	1 12	6	0 10	2 12	1 8	1 8	2 12	3 0	0 8	0 12	5.90
35 to 54 years ..	3	1 12	6	0 10	2 8	1 8	1 8	2 8	2 12	0 6	0 8	5.70
55 to 74 years ..	3	1 8	4	0 6	2 0	1 12	1 0	2 8	2 12	0 6	0 6	4.80
75 years and over	3	1 4	4	0 6	1 12	1 12	1 0	2 0	2 4	0 4	0 6	4.40
Pregnant ⁷	5½	2 0	7	0 10	3 0	3 0	2 0	2 8	4 8	0 6	0 6	7.00
Nursing ⁷	8	2 0	6	0 10	4 0	3 0	1 8	3 12	4 8	0 12	0 12	8.10
Men:												
20 to 34 years ..	3	2 0	5	0 8	4 8	1 8	0 12	4 4	3 8	0 14	1 2	6.80
35 to 54 years ..	3	1 12	5	0 8	4 4	1 8	0 12	3 8	3 4	0 12	0 14	6.30
55 to 74 years ..	3	1 8	5	0 6	3 4	1 8	0 12	2 12	3 0	0 12	0 10	5.60
75 years and over	3	1 8	5	0 6	3 0	1 8	0 12	2 8	2 12	0 10	0 6	5.30
Total for family:												

¹ Amounts are for food as purchased or brought into the kitchen from garden or farm.

² Fluid milk and beverage made from dry or evaporated milk. Cheese and ice cream may replace some milk. Count as equivalent to a quart of fluid whole milk: Natural or processed Cheddar-type cheese, 6 oz.; cottage cheese 2½ lbs.; ice cream, 1½ quarts.

³ Bacon and salt pork should not exceed ⅓ pound for each 5 pounds of meat group.

⁴ Weight in terms of dry beans and peas, shelled nuts, and peanut butter.

⁵ Weight in terms of flour and cereal. Count 1½ pounds of bread and bakery products as 1 pound flour.

⁶ Cost estimates are for families who buy all of their food, and eat all meals and snacks at home or carried from home. They are based on selections within food groups and prices paid by survey families with low-incomes. Costs given are for individuals in 4-person families. For individuals in other size families, the following adjustments are suggested: 1-person—add 20 percent; 2-persons—add 10 percent; 3-persons—add 5 percent; 5-persons—subtract 5 percent; 6-or-more-persons—subtract 10 percent.

⁷ 3 additional quarts of milk a week are suggested for pregnant and nursing women less than 20 years of age.